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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000927

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/02/2018
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: MODIIN ILLIT, THE NEWEST "CITY" IN THE WEST BANK,
EXPANDS AGAIN

REF: A. 2007 TEL AVIV 604
[1](#)B. 2007 JERUSALEM 1905

Classified By: Consul General Jake Waller, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Modiin Illit settlers recently erected two new structures to be used as synagogues at the southeastern edge of the settlement, expanding its footprint by approximately 100 feet. Neighboring Bilin villagers complained to PolOffs that the new structures prejudice the route of the security barrier between Modiin Illit and Bilin that was ordered changed by the Israeli High Court. Modiin Illit mayor Yitzhak Gutterman showed PolOff the structures May 30. He also noted that the GOI recently granted municipal status to the settlement. Photos of new caravans at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/jerusalem> END SUMMARY

New Synagogues

[1](#)2. (C) On May 26, Modiin Illit settlers erected two new structures in the Matitiah East section of the settlement. PolOff saw the caravans and met with Modiin Illit Mayor Yitzhak Gutterman May 29. The Mayor said the new structures will be used as synagogues for the Matitiah East section. He said they are within Modiin Illit's approved town plan, which extends all the way eastward to the security barrier. (Note: Modiin Illit and Beitar Illit (in the Etzion Bloc) are the fastest growing settlements in the West Bank. Both are predominantly ultra-orthodox. According to the Mayor, Modiin Illit has a population of 40,000. End Note).

[1](#)3. (C) Both new structures are comprised of several caravans pieced together, plastered with Jerusalem stone siding, and have arched roofs. Each has a placard that reads: "Ministry of Construction and Housing, 2008." PolOff observed that the structures were roughly 50 percent complete May 29. The structures are outside the Matitiah East internal security fence (not the separation barrier) and expand the built up area of the Modiin Illit settlement by approximately 100 feet to the east. Gutterman also said he intends to add two more caravans shortly.

Bilin Neighbors Protest

[1](#)4. (C) Villagers in neighboring Bilin immediately protested the new structures and prevented work at the site May 26 for five hours until police arrived, according to Mohammed Khatib, who participated in the protest. Khatib told PolOff that Israeli Police arrived and informed villagers that the construction "is legal and there's nothing to be done." Villagers now maintain guard on the western edge of Bilin watching over their land sitting inside the security barrier and say they will quickly react to any development activity on the land.

15. (C) Khatib said the new structures prejudice the route of the separation barrier that the High Court of Justice ordered changed in September 2007 (reftels). According to the High Court's decision, the MOD must submit a plan to reroute the barrier (which would give Bilin villagers access to their land), but has not yet done so. Activist Kobi Snitz complained to PolOffs that the Civil Administration was present to oversee the placement of the new caravan structures and was party to "creating new facts on the ground" when it was supposed to be working on a re-route plan.

Next Steps: Municipal Status;
Linking Sewage System

16. (C) Mayor Gutterman told PolOff that he has succeeded to obtain municipal status for Modiin Illit and now has "all the necessary signatures," including from MOI, MOD, and IDF. Gutterman added that his IDF contacts told him the USG had specifically signed off on the approval. He intends to hold a public ceremony June 14.

17. (C) Gutterman showed PolOff a newly initiated project to link Modiin Illit's sewer system with green-line Israeli towns Modiin and Ramle. PolOff saw a new school under construction that will be inaugurated September 1. According to the Mayor, some 1000 homes are under construction in Modiin Illit, and PolOff observed several apartment blocks, and dozens of residential and commercial structures under construction. At two different sites, bulldozers are clearing land for new construction. According to Gutterman,

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about 800 Palestinians from Bilin and other neighboring villages work daily at construction sites in Modiin Illit.
WALLES